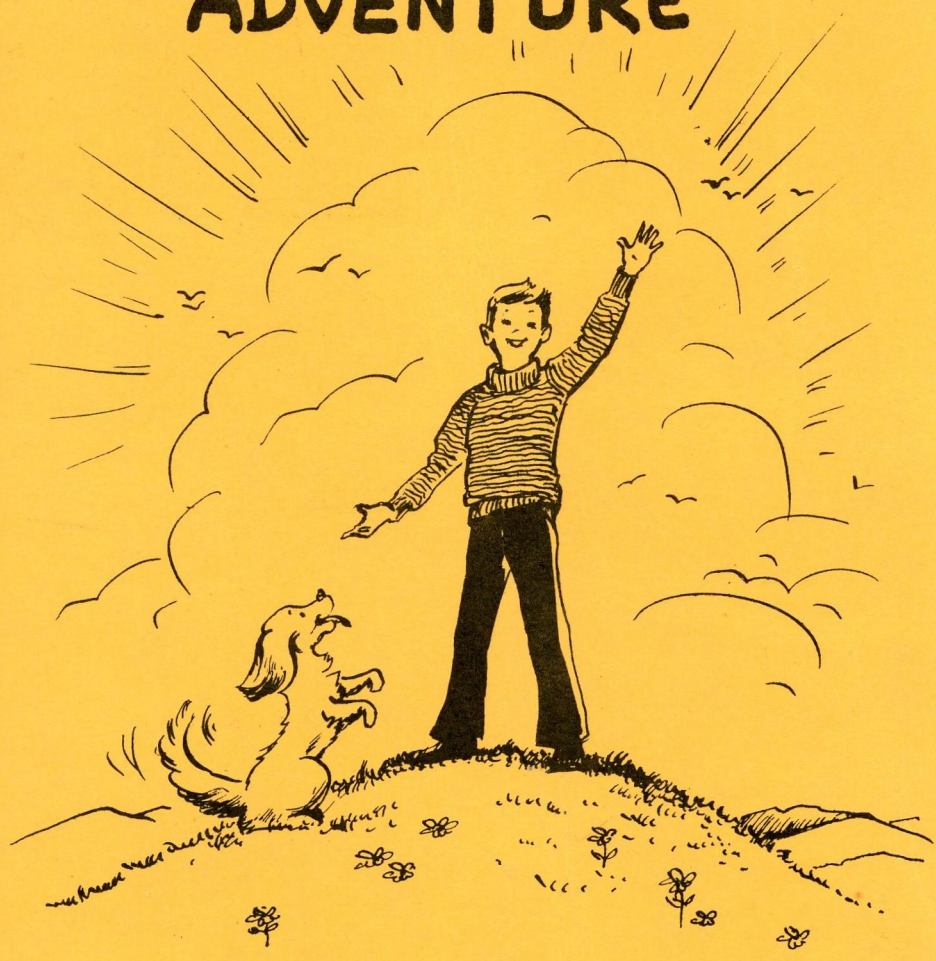
PETER'S GREAT ADVENTURE



DEDICATION

To Bishop Harry H. Banks

- J.V.

PETER'S

Great Adventure

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Characters in the Story

Here are some of the characters you will meet as you read this story:

Peter: A boy who was always happy. This is the story of Peter's great adventure.

Dr. Kay: The good doctor from Germany whose real name the children could not pronounce.

Mr. and Mrs. Smith: Peter's father and mother.

Irene: Peter's pretend sister, who turned out not to be a pretend person after all.

Susan: Peter's older sister, who loved to sing when she was happy.

Uncle Harry: The Reverend Harry Hurst, minister of the church at the top of Hill Street.

Sparky: Peter's little dog (who had died when Peter was six).

Mike Lee: A Chinese boy who had spent most of his life in the hospital.

Councilman Watkins: An angry member of the City Council who was not in favor of a new shopping mall.

City bus driver: He did want the shopping mall, so that Hill Street would be a safer place.

The man beside the pool: Although he did not speak to Peter, he gave Peter great hope and peace.

Simon: A young son born to Peter's parents. Simon was also always a happy boy.

Peter was always a happy boy. He was especially happy today - he had made the best grade of the entire class in math and his teacher had put his painting up on the wall. He would not tell his mother, he thought, that he was late because he had been talking during the Youth Group meeting after school at the church. The Minister had had him stay to help put the chairs away. But he had his papers to sell before he went home, so Mom would never find out.

He ran towards the corner of Hill Street and First Avenue, where he always sat on the steps of the bank with his papers. A lot of people bought papers from him because he was always happy and would share a joke with them, or be whistling a song.

He was whistling now, the song they had been singing in the Youth Group: "Onward into Glory, Onward into Life . . ."*

Dr. Kay was coming down the steps of his clinic. Peter waved to him and ducked around the back of a parked car. He heard the Doctor shout, looked up and saw the bus - then tried to sidestep. The bus hit him, sending him spinning back onto the pavement. Suddenly he was in two places at once! He was standing on the pavement, watching all the people pile out of the bus. But there he was also, lying on the road between the bus and the parked car!

Doctor Kay was very upset. He snapped at the nearest men, who stood like statues. Then he took a deep breath and realized that he had spoken in German. He spoke again - this time in English so he would be understood.

"I said get an ambulance! And stand back! Someone attend to the driver, take him into my clinic!" His hand was shaking as he slid it under the back of the neck of the Peter who was lying down.

"He's a foreigner!" whispered a lady with a powdery face.

- -

* Use the tune of "Onward, Christian Soldiers" for this song.

"He's my friend!" shouted Peter. But nobody even looked at him for they were all looking at the Peter who was on the ground.

Two policemen arrived and one made the people stand back while the other got out his notebook and pen.

"You saw this?" the policeman asked. The Doctor nodded and stood up slowly as an ambulance attendant took his place. He whispered to the ambulance attendant and then looked at the policeman.

"Yes, I saw - I have feared this since I first came here."

"Your name, Sir?" the policeman asked, ready to write on his pad.

"Kaufmann, Doctor Johannes Kaufmann."

"How do you spell. . .?"

"Ask my nurse," the Doctor snapped as he turned and strode back into his clinic. He was very upset.

Peter suddenly realized how late it must be getting. "Mom'll be worried," he thought. All at once, there he was, in the kitchen at home! "How'd I get here?" he asked. Nobody answered him. Mom was setting the table for dinner. That was Peter's job.

Peter's Dad came in. "Where's Peter?" he asked.

"I'm here, right in front of you!"

"He's late tonight," said Mom to Dad.

"I am not late!"

"He wasn't at the bank when I went by," Dad said.

"I'm here! I'm right in front of you, Dad, can't you see me?"

"It's not like Peter to dawdle on the way home," Mom said.

"I didn't dawdle, I came very fast," Peter said. He watched his Mother put some hot dishes on the table. Dad was reading the paper.

"I'll put some food in the oven to keep warm for Peter until he gets home," Mom said.

"What for? I am home, I have been for ages, can't you see me?" He thought it was very strange that no one had said "Hello, Peter," or "How was school today, Peter?"

The phone rang and Dad answered it. "James Smith speaking. . . Yes, I'm Peter Smith's father." He listened for a while. "We'll come right now," he said, looking very worried.

"Who was that, Jim?"

"The hospital. . .Peter's at the hospital, and the

Doctor wants us to go up there."

"I'm not! I'm here!" But Dad took no notice, he was already leading Mom out to the car. "Hey, wait for me," Peter shouted, but Dad didn't stop.

"What's the matter with Peter?" Mom asked Dad.

"Nothing," exclaimed Peter.

"I don't know," said Dad to Mom, holding the car door open for her. "The Doctor only said that we were to come to the hospital. Maybe they want us to bring him home."

Peter was shouting now. "I am home! It's no use looking for me at the hospital when I'm here. Hey! Wait for me - I'm coming too!" He shot into the car just as Dad started it. He started whistling again, the same song as before. He was worried about his Mother, though, for she looked so upset and was nearly crying. Dad was trying to cheer her up.

"Come on, Love, it may not be very bad at all. They may only want us to pick Peter up and take him home."

"I'm not hurt at all!" Peter tried to tell them. Peter stretched himself - and shot up through the roof of the car! "Hey, I'm flying!" But he wasn't flying, just sitting there in the air. He looked at all the cars whizzing past, below him in the street. "Where's our car?" he wondered. And then he found himself sitting in the back seat again, just as the car stopped in the hospital parking lot. "How'd I do that?" he wondered once again.

Doctor Kay was walking back and forth in the hospital waiting room. He frowned as he saw Peter's Mother and Father come in the door.

"Where's Peter?" asked Mom. Dad looked at Doctor Kay's face and he seemed to know what the Doctor was going to say.

"It's bad news, isn't it?" he asked. Doctor Kay nodded.

"He isn't. . .dead. , .is he?" asked Mom. She looked as if she was going to cry. Dad put his arm around her.

"I'm afraid so," Doctor Kay said to them. "Peter

was dead when he arrived at the hospital."

"I am NOT dead! I'm alive. . ." But his Mother was crying and Dad had both arms around her.

"He ran into a bus on the corner of Hill Street and First Avenue. He died instantly, there can have been no pain," said Doctor Kay.

Peter was trying to get them all to listen to him. "How come I'm still here then? I'm alive, so I can't be dead. I'm just the same as I was when I bumped into that bus."

"No, you're not," said another voice from somewhere. "Now you can fly!"

"Who are you?" asked Peter. He couldn't see anybody where he thought the voice was coming from.

"I'm your little sister," said the voice.

"But I haven't got a little sister, only a pretend one called Irene - and Susan, but she's grown up and gone to live in Seatown."

"I am Irene, and I'm not a pretend!" Then Peter saw her and she was laughing. She had long brown hair, the same color as Susan's, and she was wearing a pink dress. Peter just stared.

"Where'd you come from?" he asked. "You weren't here before."

"Come with me and I'll show you," she answered. "Hold my hand and jump."

Peter did just as he was told and found himself flying with Irene. They landed in a park with

flowering trees around it. Irene ran towards a tree covered with blue flowers. "There's Uncle Harry!" she said. "He tells the most wonderful stories!"

Uncle Harry was an old white-haired man, not much taller than Peter. There were children sitting all around him on the grass. He was drawing pictures as he told the children a story.

"Come and sit by me, Peter," he said to the boy. There was just enough room for Peter and Irene beside him. All at once there was a "whoof," and a black and white dog rolled into Peter's lap and started licking his face!

"Stop it, Sparky! Down, Sparky!" exclaimed Peter. The little dog sat down. "Gee, it really is Sparky!" the boy said. It was his dog who had died when he was six.

"Yes, it is," said Uncle Harry. "David's horse is here too. And that thing over there is Pauline's." That "thing" was a tiny white pony with a silver horn on its head. When Uncle Harry finished his story some of the children went away and a few more came. One of them was a Chinese boy about Peter's age; he had something that looked like a large butterfly. When he came close Peter saw that it

was a tiny dragon.

"Is it real?" asked Peter.

"It's a toy dragon," said the other boy. "It hangs in my window all day and then it comes with me at nighttime. Grandmother gave it to me - she said it would look after me. Doctor Kay put it in the hospital window for me. He's nice, he always brings me an apple or an orange. He makes me eat it too, even when I'm not very hungry. Last time he gave me the juice of the orange."

Sparky tried to catch the baby dragon but it flew out of his reach. Sparky yapped and jumped but he was not able to catch the dragon. Then it landed on Sparky's tail. The little dog still couldn't catch it even when he ran in circles. The two boys laughed at his antics, but all at once the Chinese boy started to cry.

"What's the matter?" asked Peter.

"My head's sore," said the boy, then he vanished.

"I wonder where he went?" thought Peter - and at once he found himself in a hospital room. There was a toy dragon hanging in the window. The Chinese boy was lying in the bed, looking at Doctor Kay who was reading a chart.

"That's my Doctor too," thought Peter, and then he thought about his Mother. "I ought to go home, Mom will be worrying about me." He found himself standing in the kitchen at home. Mom was crying and Dad had his arms around her.

"You've still got me, Love," he was saying. "Peter wouldn't like you to be unhappy, wherever he is."

"He's gone. . ." Mom said.

"I haven't gone anywhere!" Peter said. He felt like crying himself because his Mother was so unhappy.

"Don't you cry too," said a voice. It was Irene.

"Uncle Harry sent me to look for you; come back to the garden with me."

"I don't want to go and leave Mom so unhappy," Peter answered.

"Let's go and ask Uncle Harry, he'll know what to do," said Irene. Right then they found themselves back in the garden, under the blue flowering tree. Uncle Harry was waiting for them, and he seemed to know what Peter and Irene wanted.

"The best thing that you can do right now is to pray for them," he said.

"How?" asked Peter. "Do I have to go to Youth Group and listen to the minister talk and talk and talk?"

Uncle Harry laughed. "I hope I'm not as bad as that!" he said. "You don't have to go to church or a youth group to pray. Just sit down here and wait until you are very quiet, then ask God to help your Mother and Father. You always get an answer."

"I didn't," Peter told him. "I prayed for a bike and I didn't get an answer or a bike."

"Maybe the answer was no," said Uncle Harry.

Peter thought for a moment. "Maybe the answer was that I should work for it," he said. "That's what Dad said when I asked him. That's why I started selling the papers. I nearly had enough money to buy a bike too, because Dad said he would give me a dollar for every dollar I saved. I might have had it by Christmas...it was a silly thing to pray for, wasn't it?" he added.

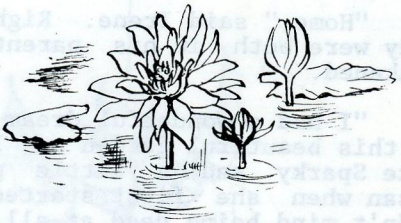
"Perhaps it's best to pray for people and not things," Uncle Harry suggested.

"What about animals?" asked Irene.

"I can see no reason why you shouldn't pray for animals," answered Uncle Harry. "The Father made them too." He sat down and the two children sat beside him. Peter waited until Irene was quiet.

"Please, God, will you help Mom to be happy again

and help her to know that I'm in a happy place," he prayed. He sat quietly with Uncle Harry while Irene went to play with Sparky and David and his horse. When Uncle Harry left him, Peter and Irene walked by a stream that had water lilies on it.



In one pool there were all white water lilies, in the next the lilies were all blue. The next pool had yellow water lilies on it and yellow flowers on tall stalks all around the edge. There was a seat under a huge tree fern. Sparky ran up to the bench and began to bark at the person who was sitting there.

"Mommy!" shouted Peter as he ran towards the seat. "Mommy, how'd you get here?" Sparky was jumping up and down barking, and Peter nearly tripped over him.

"Come here, Sparky," said Irene. Sparky bounced over to Irene and back to Peter. Mommy was laughing.

"Are you all right, Peter?" she asked.

"I'm just fine!" Peter answered. "I can't see what all the fuss is about. This is a fabulous place and I can play with Irene and Sparky. I just wish everyone wasn't so unhappy about it."

"We miss you," said his Mother.

"Why don't you have another baby?" asked Irene.

"I don't want another baby, I want Peter," said Mom. "Anyway, it's Susan's turn now; I'm too old to want another baby."

"Susan isn't married," said Irene. "But I wish she would hurry up and get married. All her schoolmates are married and some have two or three children."

"Let's go and see the garden and the flowering trees," Peter said hurriedly, for he could see from the look on Mom's face that they were going to get a lecture about minding other people's business. They were just coming to the tree with blue flowers when Mom disappeared.

"Where'd she go?" Peter asked.

"Home," said Irene. Right then, Peter found that they were both in his parents' bedroom. Mom had just awakened.

"I had a wonderful dream, Jim!" she said. "I was in this beautiful garden and I saw Peter with a dog like Sparky and a little girl who looked just like Susan when she first started to school. Peter said he didn't mind being dead at all."

"Peter was always happy here and I don't see why he would be any different just because he's dead," answered Dad. "I'm so glad to see you looking happier, you were smiling in your sleep."

"The little girl was just like Susan," Mom said again. "She was asking the same kind of cheeky questions."

Irene was giggling to herself during this conversation! "What kind of questions, Love?" asked Dad.

"She asked me why I didn't have another baby, and I said that I was too old."

"Yes, Susan was always asking that when she was young," said Dad. "You are not too old, to me you're as beautiful as you ever were. You're younger than Mrs. Lee and she's just had another baby." He went on talking about adopting a baby boy.

"Dad's always talked about adopting a boy," said Peter to Irene. "He said that I would have somebody to play with."

Dad was looking at the calendar. "I may be late tonight," he told Mom. "I'm going to a meeting about turning Hill Street into a shopping mall. It's about time something was done about it."

"Who called the meeting?" asked Mom.

"Lee, the Chinaman who has the grocery next door to the Doctor's clinic. He tried before but the City Council said it was more important to spend the money on a new arts center instead of making the street into a Chinese kindergarten. There's no need to be that rude about the man having ten children!"

"The boy with the dragon is Mike Lee," whispered Irene to Peter.

"The councilmen also said that it would be very profitable for Mr. Lee to have all the people walking past his store instead of driving, and that maybe he wasn't thinking of the good for the city's children as much as of his own pocketbook."

"I'd go there more often if I could get a place to park," said Mom. "The girls in there always give good value for your money."

Irene was now thinking about Mike Lee. "I wonder how he is," she said to Peter. "Shall we go and see?" They arrived at the hospital at once but Mike was asleep. Uncle Harry was sitting beside him.

"Hello, Uncle Harry," said Peter. "Mom came. . ."

"He can't hear you, he's on the other side," Irene told Peter. "Mike isn't here - let's go look for him."

"But there he is, right in front of you!" said Peter. He was still trying to work out what Irene had meant when they landed under the blue tree. There was Mike sitting under it, and the dragon was flying around his head. He looked very unhappy.

"What's the matter, Mike?" asked Irene.

"I don't want to go back!" he said. "I want to stay here where I don't have to be in bed all the time.

I want to go home and be with Mom and Dad and all the family." He started to cry again and Irene put her arm around him.

"You can't do both," she said. "I wish I had a real live family to go to. But I have to wait until my Mother gets married and she hasn't even got a boy-friend yet."

"Doctor Kay isn't married," said Mike, now interested in Irene's problem.

"Mommy hasn't even met Doctor Kay," said Irene, "and she might not like him."

"Everybody likes Doctor Kay," Mike told her. "He always says something nice. All the nurses wish he'd take them out but he won't."

"Why not?" asked Peter.

"He says he's too busy," answered Mike.

It seemed that no time at all had passed when Mike suddenly said that he had to go back. They all went. Peter saw that there was a silver cord between the Mike beside him and the one on the bed. There were more people in the hospital room now. Uncle Harry had gone but Doctor Kay was there with two nurses. An old Doctor came in too.

"Kaufmann, you should have gone home hours ago!" he said. "Don't forget about that meeting tonight."

"This is more important," said Doctor Kay.

Peter then noticed that the silver cord between the two Mike Lees was fading and getting thinner. A nurse went out to get Mr. and Mrs. Lee. The silver cord got even thinner and then broke completely. Doctor Kay said something in German.

"He's dead," said the old doctor.

"No, I'm not! I never felt more alive!" Mike Lee was saying as he stood with Peter and Irene.

"Don't start that again, Mike," said Irene. "You should have seen Peter arguing with his parents!"

Mrs. Lee was crying softly. "Doctor, will you still be going to the meeting?" asked Mr. Lee. "I want to go home with Mother."

Doctor Kay looked at his watch. "I will go," he said. "You go home with your wife."

"I want to go too," said Mike. "I want to get out of this place - I've spent most of my life here."

The three children were soon bored with the meeting and were just about to leave when Doctor Kay walked in. The first speaker had been a store owner who was in favor of the shopping mall. Just as Doctor Kay came into the room, somebody in the crowd began to yell at the speaker.

"That's all right for you, you'll get more business," the voice shouted. "You just want the street made into a mall because you can't make a profit now!"

Then someone asked the Doctor to speak. The man in the crowd yelled again. "Who are you?" he asked. "Someone else who doesn't have enough work?"

"I am a Doctor and I have too much work," answered Doctor Kay quietly.

Again the man yelled from the crowd. "He's a foreigner! What does a foreigner know about our town?"

"I know that in three months I have had to attend to five accidents on the corner of Hill Street and First Avenue," answered the Doctor. "One of them was fatal. Does a child have to die to prove a street is dangerous? How many more people will be hurt or killed on that road before something is done?"

"Gee, I never saw Doctor Kay angry before," said Mike.

"There are road accidents all over the city," the man said to the Doctor. "Why pick that one place?"

"That's Councilman Watkins," Peter whispered to his friends. Then somebody else stood up.

"Councilman Watkins, I drive city busses, and I can tell you that what the Doctor says is true. If someone steps off the sidewalk in front of the Hill Street Clinic he can't see the traffic on the road. He can't be seen by anybody coming down the hill either. A child has been killed on that corner, and it was not the fault of the bus driver."

The bus driver talked some more. He said that the City Council should have done something about Hill Street long ago, instead of spending all the money on

the Arts Center that would take another three years to finish. He finished by saying that the bus drivers were not going to drive another bus on Hill Street, and if something wasn't done about the road they would go on strike.

"This is all your doing!" yelled Councilman Watkins, pointing at the Doctor. "We don't need any foreigners telling us what to do!" Councilman Watkins got up and walked out.

"I'll block it in Council!" he shouted from the doorway.

"And you won't get my vote again," muttered someone near Peter.

"Now we can get down to business," said the bus driver. "My idea is that we all sign a petition and elect a committee to take it to the Mayor's office. I propose Doctor Whatsisname to be on the committee."

"No," answered the Doctor firmly.

"You can't back out now just because somebody has been rude!" said the bus driver. "The Mayor is more likely to listen to you than anybody else."

There was a lot more talking about who would be on the committee, and the meeting finally decided that there would be six people. They elected Doctor Kay, Peter's father, the bus driver, the lady who owned the fabric shop, and Les Lee, Mike's big brother. Harry Hurst, the minister from the church at the top of Hill Street, was elected chairman.

"That's Uncle Harry!" exclaimed Peter, looking at the minister. He still could not understand how Uncle Harry could talk to him sometimes and not hear him at other times. The children watched as the bus driver thought out the petition and the people all signed it as they went out the doors.

"Doctor Kay looks fed up with it all," said Irene.

"So would you if you'd been called those rude names," said Peter. The children watched the Doctor as

he drove off. He was going too fast.

"That's not the way to your place, Doctor," said Mike.

"He can't hear you," said Irene. "Anyway, he knows where he lives. I wonder where he is going?"

"I don't think he knows himself," said Mike.

"Away from all that horrible smoke in the hall," said Peter. "But his car is all smoky too."

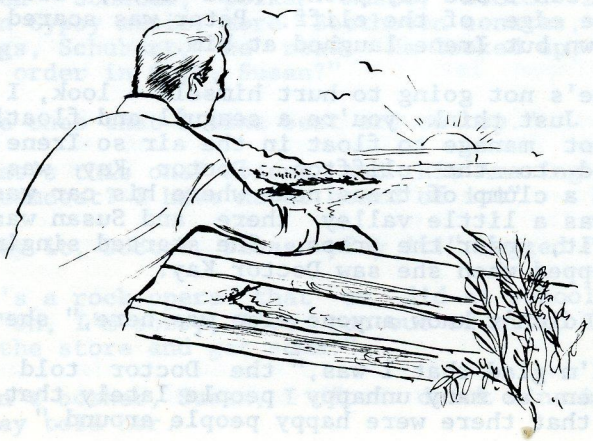
"He doesn't smoke," Mike said. "He says it's a dirty habit and very bad for you."

"But it isn't smoke - it's his own anger," explained Irene.

Doctor Kay turned onto the freeway and put his foot down. There wasn't very much traffic and he shot past all the turnoffs.

"He's going to Seatown," said Peter.

"Or Portland, or the Interstate," Mike guessed. Doctor Kay drove on and on. Peter could see that now the smoke was getting thinner. By the time the Doctor had reached the first houses of Seatown it had nearly all gone. The Doctor drove along the waterfront for a while, then parked on a clifftop to watch the sunrise. He got out of his car and leaned on the fence, watching the waves come in on the rocks far below him. He seemed to be listening.



The children heard something too. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow, Praise Him. . ."

"Who's that singing?" asked Mike.

"Somebody on the beach," said Peter.

"My Mommy," said Irene.

"No, it's Susan!" Peter said in surprise. "She always sings church songs when she's happy. But she doesn't get up this early."

"Well, she did today," answered Irene. "Susan is my Mother, Silly!"

"That's not a church song," said Mike who had been listening to the singing instead of joining in the argument.

Susan was singing, "Early one morning, just as the sun was rising, I heard a lassie sing in the valley below. . ."

"She's coming closer," said Peter.

". . .Oh never leave me. . ." the song went on.

Irene was looking at the Doctor. "Watch Doctor Kay," she told the boys. He was trying to see where the voice was coming from, but it had stopped.

"Susan must be coming up the path," said Peter.

"I can't see any path," Mike said, floating out over the edge of the cliff. Peter was scared he would fall down but Irene laughed at him.

"He's not going to hurt himself - look, I can do it too! Just think you're a seagull and float!" Peter could not manage to float in the air so Irene and Mike returned to the clifftop. Doctor Kay was walking towards a clump of trees near where his car was parked. There was a little valley there and Susan was walking along it, under the trees. She started singing again, but stopped when she saw Doctor Kay.

"I didn't know anyone else was here," she said.

"I'm glad that I was," the Doctor told her. "I have seen so many unhappy people lately that I almost forgot that there were happy people around."

Susan laughed. "I have my worries too," she said. "But it was such a beautiful morning that I forgot them all and went for a walk."

"I wish that I could forget my worries by going for a walk or driving in the car."

"Sometimes it helps if you tell your problems to someone else. My name is Susan, what's yours?"

"Johannes."

"Would you like a cup of coffee and breakfast, Johannes?" Susan asked.

"For me, a cup of coffee usually is breakfast," said the Doctor.

"Then come and have one," said Susan. "I live near here." Doctor Kay locked his car, then they walked across the road and down an alleyway to Susan's apartment. It was in a big old house that needed a coat of paint. Her apartment was two rooms cluttered up with books, records and several half-finished paintings.

The children had followed of course. "I've never been here before," said Peter. "Susan wrote and said she had a new apartment."

"Would you like some music, Johannes?" Susan asked the Doctor. "You can put on any record that you like while I make the coffee."

The Doctor looked through the stack of records. "Beethoven Sonatas, polka music, Doctor Zhivago, Hungarian Gypsy music, more Beethoven sonatas, Russian Folk Songs, Schubert," he read. He looked up, "Do you have any order in this, Susan?"

"The ones that I like best are on top."

"What's this one? Joseph and His Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat? I have never heard of it!"

"Play it, Doctor, please play it!" begged Peter.

"It's a rock opera that we did at school," said Susan. "Oh, I'm sorry, I've run out of milk. I'll go down to the store and get some."

"Don't bother, Susan, I often drink mine black," Doctor Kay told her.

"Well, I don't like it black myself. And I also promised to feed Mrs. Jones' cats this weekend and they will be waiting for their milk too." Susan put the record on and told him, "Make yourself at home, I'll be gone only five minutes. I'm sorry to be such a poor hostess."

Susan brought Doctor Kay his cup of black coffee as she left. He lay down on the bed nearest the window to listen to the music.

"I like this record," Peter told the others. "Susan used to play it for me. It's all about Joseph and his coat of many colors and how he helped Pharoah in Egypt."

"Look at Doctor Kay!" exclaimed Mike. There was a fuzzy cloud around his head. Then there was another Doctor Kay standing beside him, with a thick shiny silver cord between them. The second Doctor vanished.

"How'd he do that?" asked Mike. "How'd he get to be two people?"

Irene laughed. "He was two people all the time," she said. "The earth-body is really only a house for the real you, and the silver cord is between the two while the earth body is alive. . . Oh, here's Mommy back!"

Susan came back into the room and smiled when she saw the Doctor asleep on the bed with the coffee untouched on the table beside him. The record finished and Susan turned it over. She was very quiet but Doctor Kay woke up. He heard the music, "I wore my coat, with golden lining, bright colors shining, any dream will do. . ."

"Is that the same record?" he asked sleepily.

"Yes, Joseph went in a dream to his Mother to show her that he was still alive," said Susan.

"I dreamed that I was in Vienna with my wife," said Doctor Kay in a soft voice.

"You said he wasn't married, Mike!" exclaimed Irene.

"She died last year," Doctor Kay told Susan sadly, and stood with his back to Susan as he gazed out the window. Then the children saw another woman standing beside him. She had beautiful long blonde hair, and she seemed to be very unhappy.

"I wonder why we didn't see her before," said Peter.

"I suppose Doctor Kay brought her here by thinking about her," said Irene.

"Why can't she see us if she's dead too?" Mike wondered.

"She isn't looking at us, Mike," explained Irene. She went near to the lady and touched her hand. The lady looked down at her and smiled.

"Come with us," Irene invited. The lady didn't seem to understand. Then she noticed Peter and Mike. "Come with us to the garden," repeated Irene. Mike put his hand in the lady's other hand. They all thought very hard about the blue tree - and there they were. Standing under the tree was a white-haired man.

"Father!" cried the lady.

"Don't be so sad about Johannes," the old gentleman told her softly.

"He's so unhappy, Father," she said. "He tries to hide it by going to the new country and working hard. Work, work, work, often he works all night! He's even more lonely than he would have been if he had stayed at home with his friends. It makes me unhappy to see him so sad."

The old man smiled at her. "He was very much in love with you, you know," he told her gently. "Come, we will pray for him." And they both vanished from the children's sight.

Irene had seen something else interesting now. "Look! There's David and Pauline, let's all go play with them," she said to the boys.

"You two go ahead. I don't want to play," Peter replied.

"Peter! You're not supposed to be sad here!" said Irene. "This is supposed to be a heaven-world where everyone is happy!"

"I just want to be by myself a while to think."

"Oh, all right then," she said. "You go and play by yourself if you want to!"

Peter was halfway to the path by the stream when he found himself being sucked down into thick brown smoke. He was scared and tried to call out for help but he could not. He landed with a bump in a smoke-filled room. He couldn't see a thing but angry red flashes. But he could hear two voices, one very loud and angry, the other small and scared.

The smoke cleared a bit and he could see that he was in a newspaper office. "Maybe traffic lights later!" roared the loud voice. "Did the man say anything else, Evans?"

"Yessir," said the scared voice. "The Mayor said that he was going to put no-parking signs up Hill Street and have it made into a one-way road."

"Is that all?"

"Yessir."

"No, that's not all! A boy is dead, others have been hurt, one bus driver is in the hospital, the other drivers are on strike, the students are outside City Hall with coffins and signs - and you put the story in the inside pages!" The man was thumping his desk. "Front page, man! Front page! Blow it up with pictures! Big headlines! Ask how many more children have to die! We'll have that mall if I get the sack!"

"Yessir!"

"One more thing, Evans! How many ways does that Doctor spell his name?"

"One, Sir."

"You spelled it four different ways! Get out of here and don't come back until the job is done right!"

"Yes-sir!"

Peter, just then, found himself shooting up into light, just as if he was coming out of a very dark tunnel. He arrived by the blue tree. Irene and Mike were taking turns to ride on David's pony. Peter still didn't feel like playing. He wanted to be by himself so that he could think about all the things that had happened to him. He walked down the stream, past the white pool and the blue pool. He sat for a while on the seat by the yellow pool and then walked on, down some steps by a little waterfall.

The pool at the bottom of the waterfall was clear, with no waterlilies or fish in it. Peter sat on a rock and watched the water splashing into the pool. He was thinking about how unhappy the Doctor and his dead wife were. He thought about how sad his own parents had been, and how angry the newpaperman was.

"I wish I hadn't been so careless and made everyone so unhappy," he thought. "Irene is wrong, Heaven is being with someone you love and seeing them happy."

A reflection in the pool moved, and Peter looked up and saw someone watching him. Later he could never remember what the person looked like, but he did remember the peace in his eyes. A wonderful feeling of love flowed through him, and he knew that there was no reason to worry about his Mother and Dad, or Doctor Kay and his wife, that everything was working out in a perfect plan. Peter looked back into the water, feeling the peace of the still, deep

pool, the harmony of the garden, the song of the birds. When he looked up, the person was no longer there. Yet Peter knew that He had not really gone away for he still felt the stillness and joy inside his heart, and the love flowing over and through him. At first Peter wanted to sing one of Susan's church songs, but he couldn't remember the words and, anyway, the song was too slow. After a while he leaned back on the springy ferns behind the rock he was sitting on. The tree ferns above him seemed to shine green and silver and Peter could see the sky between each of the tiny leaves. It seemed to him that the garden was a part of this person's love and that He could be reached at any place or at any time just by thinking about Him. Peter watched the sky through the tree ferns and enjoyed the feeling of Peace.

* * *

Later he went back to Irene and tried to tell her about it, but she did not understand. The only person who did understand was Uncle Harry.

"Let's go and see your Mother," was all that Irene said.

Much more time had passed than Peter had thought. He saw Mom with a birthday cake with "23" on it in colored icing. She had set the table with four places.

Dad came in and kissed Mom. "How's the birthday party coming on, dear?" he asked. Mom was laughing to herself. She looked at Dad and then went on setting the table.

"Come on, Love, what's the joke?" Dad asked her.

"Do you know what that idiot Doctor of Susan's said today?" she asked.

"No, how could I? Is he going to marry Susan? I couldn't think of anybody I'd rather have as a son."

"How about one of your own?" asked Mom.

"You mean adopt one?" Dad asked.

"No, he says I'm going to have a baby!" Dad sat down very suddenly. Peter and Irene laughed at the look of amazement on his face. Then Doctor Kay and Susan walked in.

"Johan, is she telling the truth?"

"If she said that she's going to have a baby!" Then they all laughed joyously.

"This does call for a celebration!" exclaimed Dad.

"There's more!" said Doctor Kay. "There's something special that I must ask - Mr. and Mrs. Smith, may I marry your daughter?"

"Of course!" Mom and Dad exclaimed together.

"I'm not a very good catch," he warned, laughing. "Already I have not come when I said I was taking her out, and I'm a lot older than she is. But I won't wish an odd-sounding name on Susan and our children. We will be Doctor and Mrs. Kay, which is what the children in the hospital call me, thanks to a nurse who couldn't read my writing!"

"I only hope you two are as happy as we are," Dad told them.

"Here is my present for Susan," said the Doctor, putting a ring on Susan's finger. "It is the only thing I have which belonged to my Mother." Everyone admired the ring, which was an amethyst with opals around it.

"Just like a flower," Susan said softly.

"When?" asked Dad.

"The Reverend Harry Hurst is going to marry us in the Hill Street Church on Easter Monday," Susan told her parents. "Johannes wanted it to be then."

They all sat down to eat and soon the talk went to the plans for the new Hill Street shopping mall and park. Peter and Irene found that they weren't interested in that subject, so they went back to the garden. Peter began to enjoy listening to Uncle Harry's stories and playing with the other children and the pets so much that he seemed to forget about visiting his family. It began to seem that all those things had happened in a dream a long time ago.

* * * * *

Simon was always a happy boy. He loved school and he liked to play with Mark Lee, whose Grandfather had a shop in the Hill Street Mall. Simon liked to visit with his older sister Susan and Uncle Johannes and their daughter Irene, too. Sometimes he wondered what his brother Peter was like, but Peter had been killed before Simon was born.

Simon was very careful to look both ways before he crossed a street. Sometimes he had this dream about running into a bus. Uncle Johannes said that it was because somebody had told him that was how Peter had died. But Uncle Johannes did not have any explanation for Simon's other dream, the one about looking into a pool and seeing a man watching him.

Simon was whistling the song that he had learnt at the Youth Group meeting that day. "Onward into Glory, Onward into Life" - that was the way the words went. Simon was very happy to be alive on such a beautiful day!

The Author

This story came to us from faraway New Zealand! The author, June Vallyon, lives at Waihi Beach, a very small and remote holiday resort at the northern end of the Bay of Plenty. Mrs. Vallyon is the mother of three young children and is involved with preschool education.

June Vallyon is a fifth-generation Theosophist, and she has been a member of both the Theosophical Society and the Liberal Catholic Church since her eleventh birthday.

June enjoys doing handicraft work and does lots of writing. This story about Peter is her first published work, however, except for newspaper articles on the subject of preschool education. We are glad that PTRG has the privilege of being her first publisher.

The Illustrator

Drucilla Lamkey has done most of the illustrations for the PTRG CHILDREN"S ANNUAL the past three years, and we have noted her special talent for drawing children that seem alive and appealing for these publications. We were happy that she consented also to draw the illustrations for this story of a boy's great adventure.

Mrs. Lamkey has lived in Wheaton, Illinois for 34 years and has been a member of the Theosophical Society for 17 years.

Drucilla is an avid music lover, environmentalist and humanitarian - and these loves are reflected in her drawings. Wherever she walks, Drucilla sees beauty.

PARENTS THEOSOPHICAL RESEARCH GROUP

Parents Theosophical Research Group was founded 46 years ago by a small group of mothers who had the idea of stressing the spiritual side of marriage and motherhood. The present-day Group of 1981 is still dedicating its efforts toward strengthening the spiritual influence of the home, with special emphasis on the theosophical approach. The Objects, stated below, clearly reflect this ideal:

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To bring to parents the light shed by the Ancient Wisdom on all problems in the home.

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